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Agreeing Before The Results Are Known

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Interagency Coordination In the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project

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Savannah Harbor Expansion Project

- Project was conditionally authorized in WRDA 1999
- Chiefs Report requires a GRR and Tier II EIS
- Need approval of 4 Federal agencies to construct
  - Army, EPA, Interior, Commerce

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Savannah Harbor Expansion Project

- Public and resource agencies were concerned about the level of uncertainty of the environmental impacts and acceptability of mitigation

- Decided to conduct the GRR and Tier II EIS through a Cooperating Agency format

- Participants are Corps (Lead), EPA, USFWS, NMFS, and Georgia Ports Authority

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Savannah Harbor Expansion Project

Conducting interagency coordination at 4 levels

- **Executive Management Group**
- **Lead & Cooperating Agencies**
- **Technical Teams**
- **Members of the Project Delivery**

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GOALS OF INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

- Integration of Agency views during the process

- Interim approvals – rather than "grade the paper at the end"

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Technical Teams

- Agency representatives
- Field level staff
- Based on specific critical resources
  - Wetlands
  - Water Quality
  - Fisheries
  - Groundwater
  - Sediment Placement

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Agreements within Technical Teams

- Required field data
- Critical resources to analyze in detail
- Development of impact assessment tools
- Adequacy of impact assessment tools
- Definition of “impact”

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Agreements within Technical Teams

- Agreements documented through MFRs
  - -- Provided to supervisors
- Major decisions taken to level of agency heads
  - -- Require letter from agency

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Lead & Cooperating Agencies Team

- Guidance on recommendations of field staff
- Participated in NEPA scoping meeting
- Participated in scoping of alternatives
- Agreed to development of Detailed Plans

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Executive Management Group

- General Direction
- Priorities
- Acceptability of Plan Formulation Process
- Position on acceptability of major impact evaluation tools
  - -- Hydro & Salinity Model
  - -- Dissolved Oxygen Model

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Conclusions

- Attempting to incorporate agencies' positions during the process
- Coordination requires time (& dollars)
- Participation in the process has increased agencies' trust
- We hope this will result in easier review for all agencies at the end

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QUESTIONS ?